



NOAA's National Weather Service

STAT



Safety Talk and Tips

Eastern Region's Environmental Safety and Health Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 3

December, 2005

*Your Eastern Region
Environmental, Safety and
Health Advisory Board*

Darin Figurskey WFO Raleigh

Bill Comeaux WFO Cleveland

Gene Auciello WFO Albany

Mike Emlaw WFO Charleston

Gregg Rishel NERFC

Craig Hunter OHRFC

Dave Nicosia WFO Binghamton

Kevin Murray ERH

Ted Wilk ERH

Preventing Seasonal Backaches

The autumn and winter seasons introduce hazards for us that are not commonly associated with our everyday work routine. However, there are tasks that we occasionally have to perform in an effort to get the job done. Those tasks may include raking leaves at a remote site or shoveling snow to release an upper air balloon or clear a path to the radar.

The good news is that 15 minutes of raking leaves or shoveling snow counts as moderate physical activity and we all should aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity everyday. The bad news is that researchers have reported an increase in the number of fatal heart attacks, especially during heavy snowfalls. Also, raking or shoveling can be made more difficult by the extreme weather conditions. Cold air makes it harder to work and breathe further adding stress on the body. Be safe, but be careful, and consider the tips below.

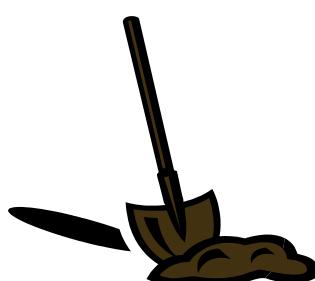
General Tips

- 1) Do not rake, shovel, or lift heavy objects first thing in the morning.
- 2) Do warm-up and stretching exercises just before beginning the job.
- 3) Try not to twist your spine.
- 4) If you need to lift a heavy load , get help.
- 5) Take frequent breaks and stretch your back in the opposite direction.
- 6) Pace yourself.
- 7) Check with your doctor.
- 8) Rake or shovel early and often.
- 9) See what you are raking or shoveling.
- 10) Always wear loose lightweight clothing.
- 11) Wear well fitting shoes with good soles to prevent slipping.
- 12) Avoid caffeine or nicotine.
- 13) Drink plenty of water.
- 14) Pick the right rake or shovel for you.



Raking Tips

- 1) Hold rake handle close to your body to maintain good posture.
- 2) Change sides frequently and avoid twisting.
- 3) Stand straight and walk to the leaves.
- 4) When leaves are under the rake, pull them straight back to you.



Snow Shoveling Tips

- 1) Lifting snow should be done with your knees.
- 2) Lift smaller loads of snow.
- 3) Turn your entire body and step in the direction in which you are throwing the snow.
- 4) Shovel early and often.

Source: Occupational Health and Safety—Stevens Publishing
Source: Active2010—Canadian Government



Picture Above - Vehicle Damage Sustained on January 11, 1999.



Picture Below - Safety cages installed on maintenance vehicles.

A Manager's Decision For Employee Safety Pays Off

In late 1998, my staff observed that FAA vehicles were equipped with safety cages in their maintenance vehicles and suggested that we should do the same in our NWS maintenance vehicles. I considered the vast amount of test equipment and spare parts stored in our vehicles, and decided it was imperative that we prevent them from becoming projectiles due to a sudden stop, or accident. My CWA covers close to 15,000 square miles and includes areas which average over 150 inches of snow. The odds of a safety incident occurring was too great for me ignore and asked them to research our options.

We located a truck "specialty" shop which sold and installed vehicle cages. Since GSA frowns on any modifications (holes, cuts, etc...), we had the installer make cosmetic alterations that were small and minimal in number. Total cost was less than \$700 for two vehicles.

On January 11, 1999, one of our technicians was involved in an accident driving to an ASOS site. A truck lost control in snowy conditions and hit the side of our vehicle, which was severely damaged. After seeing how much of the cargo was "flung" behind the cage, we are confident that the cage save him from being struck with equipment from the back.

We recommend that if your maintenance vehicles are not equipped with cages that all managers consider the risk.

Source: William Comeaux—MIC WFO CLE

Personal Protective Equipment A Recent Lesson Learned

Two Electronic Technicians (ETs) were installing a pressure vent kit for an ASOS ACU at a new FAA tower facility at an International Airport. One ET was using a hammer drill to make a one inch diameter hole in the outside concrete wall for the vent tube. The wall was twelve inches thick and the hole needed to be about eight feet off the ground so their only option was using a hammer drill. The hammer drill weighs about forty pounds and the drill bit is about five feet in length.

After drilling for a period of time, the ET needed a break and decided to let the other technician take over the task. He descended from the ladder. As he was placing the drill and bit on the sidewalk, the bit made contact with his shoe, and ripped the material. The ET believes that the steel toe safety shoe prevented penetration to the toe.

The lessoned learned by the ET was accidents tend to happen when a person is tired. Additionally, this incident has reinforced his belief that personal protective equipment is a necessity.

Types Of Safety Shoes

- Impact/compression-resistant—uses a steel or composite to protect from falling objects.
- Metatarsal shoes—designed to protect or reduce injuries when the upper foot and toes are exposed.
- Puncture-resistant—reduce the possibility of puncture wounds to the soles of the feet
- Electrical hazard—shoes are nonconductive and designed to reduce the potential for electric shock
- Electric Static Dissipative—reduces static electricity by conducting a charge from the body to the ground
- Conductive shoes—designed to minimize static electricity thus reducing ignition of volatile chemicals
- Slip-resistant—primarily required in hospitality industry

SOURCE: Stevens Publishing—Occupational Health & Safety



The Stats - Foot Injuries

- According to the Bureau Of Labor and Statistics, More than 60,000 foot injuries per year resulted in lost days.
- BLS found that 75 percent of injuries occurred when workers were not in compliance
- According to the National Council on Compensation, the average cost of a lost day foot injury is \$9,600
- 80% of all footwear injuries are caused by an object weighing no more than 30 pounds impacting the foot.

Source: Stevens Publishing Occupational Health and Safety



Foot Injuries - Common Hazards

- Falling and rolling objects, cuts and punctures
- Chemical, solvents
- Electrical current, high voltage
- Extreme cold
- Slips, trips and falls
- Wet environments

Source: Stevens Publishing Occupational Health and Safety

Nine Steps For Managers To Ensure Employees Foot Protection

- Discuss the variety of footwear safety features available with employees.
- Have a demonstration of the proper fit.
- Provide appropriate resources for employees to purchase required PPE footwear.
- Demonstrate proper cleaning and maintaining proper footwear care.
- Make sure employees know when footwear needs to be replaced.
- Talk to employees about foot care.
- Document your PPE training.
- Conduct periodic PPE compliance review
- Stay current with footwear and industry trends.

SOURCE: Stevens Publishing—Occupational Health and Safety



Safe Work Habits and Attitudes

- Be aware of hazards of your jobs and the proper protective measures to take.
- Don't take chances or unnecessary risks.
- Take time to do your job right.
- Be alert. Watch for hidden hazards.
- Watch out for other worker's safety.
- Don't cut corners.

Source: Stevens Publishing Occupational Health and Safety

REMEMBER, SAFETY FIRST!



About this Newsletter

This newsletter is brought to you on a quarterly basis by the Eastern Region Environmental Safety and Health Advisory Board to help increase awareness of the importance of the safety and health programs within the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and the National Weather Service. Your comments are welcome. Please send all comments to Kevin Murray.